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ABSTRACT

This study addresses Waukesha County Technical College's (WCTC) 5-year retention and graduate rates. Some of the key findings of the report are as follow: (1) overall, 35.4% of cohort students graduated; (2) a 4-year combined graduation rate for ethnic minorities was 26%, well below the overall average; (3) the percent of cohort that graduated within 5 years has gone from 29.6% to 40.9% while the size of the cohort decreased by 40%; (4) ethnic minority students make up 4-7% of the total population; (5) the year 1999 was a 10-year low in term of cohort size; (6) the median time between first course and graduation for A.A. students is 3 years; and (7) graduation rates among full time program enrolled students have increased to 71%, with a 4-year combined rate of 60%. After the discussion of the data, the study points out that graduation rates are not the only indicators of success. Other important indicators of success are transfer rates and achievement of educational goals. The article concludes with special attention to two facts. First, most students take more than the minimum time to complete their programs. Secondly, minority and special population graduation rates lag behind that all of all students. (MZ)

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WCTC 5-year Graduation Rates

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Waukesha County Technical College

What is Retention?

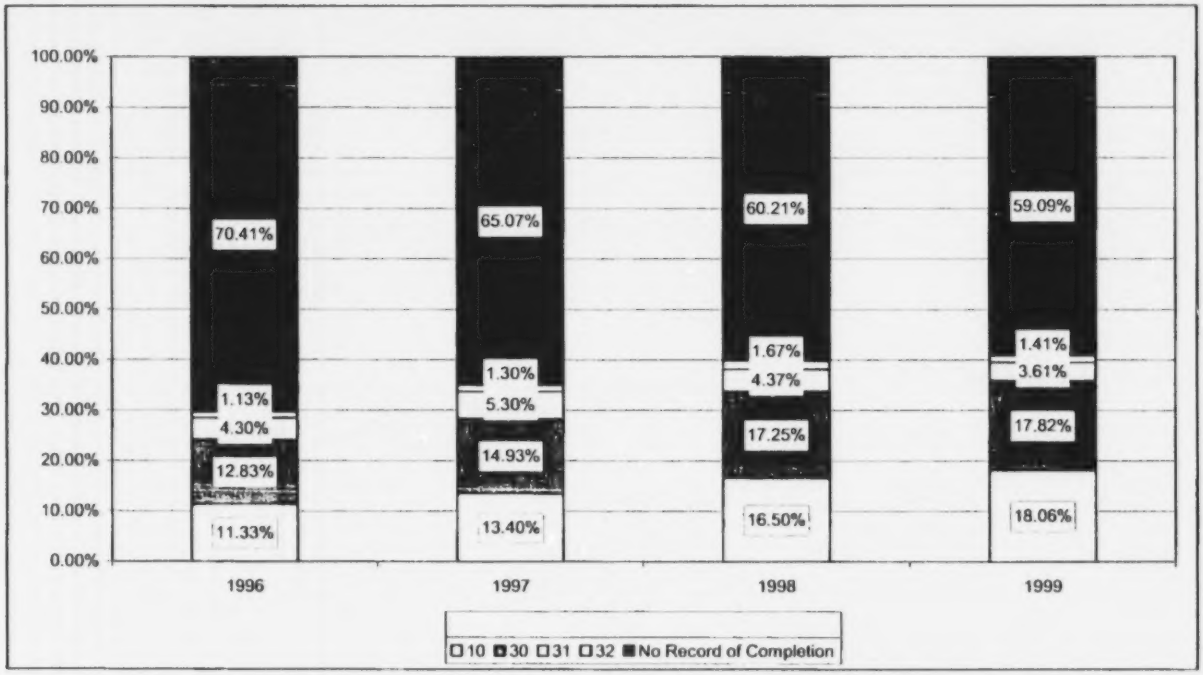
- In order to measure improvement in retention, baseline retention rates are needed
- Doug Sanford at the WTCS Board office has provided Research and Evaluation Services with the combined results of client reporting from 1996-2002.
    - The results reported here are from a 'beta test' version of the client reporting database; there may still be errors in some calculated fields
    - Please let us know if any of these data seem inconsistent with data from other sources!
- What follows are graduation rates based on FIVE years since initial registration (as opposed to the three years that would correspond to the IPEDS reports) and includes all program students, both full- and part-time
    - As a result, the first *full* cohort in these results is from 1998[1]
    - Apprenticeship completions are not included because 2003 is the first year that they are being tracked at the state level

[1] 1998 means the 1997-1998 academic year

What are graduation rates at WCTC?

- Across all four years of available data, 35.4% of cohort students graduated
  - In 1998 and 1999, 40% of all cohort students graduated*
  - Graduation rates for ethnic minorities ranged from 18% (1996) to 35% (1998) with a 4-year combined rate of 26%
  - Special populations graduation rates ranged from 35-38% with a four-year combined rate of 36%
- The percent of the cohort that graduated within five years has gone from 29.6% in 1996 to 40.9% in 1999 (+38%), but…

Highest Degree Level Attained



* Note that it is currently the fifth and final year for possible graduation for the 1999 cohort, so the graduation rate may increase

Waukesha County Technical College

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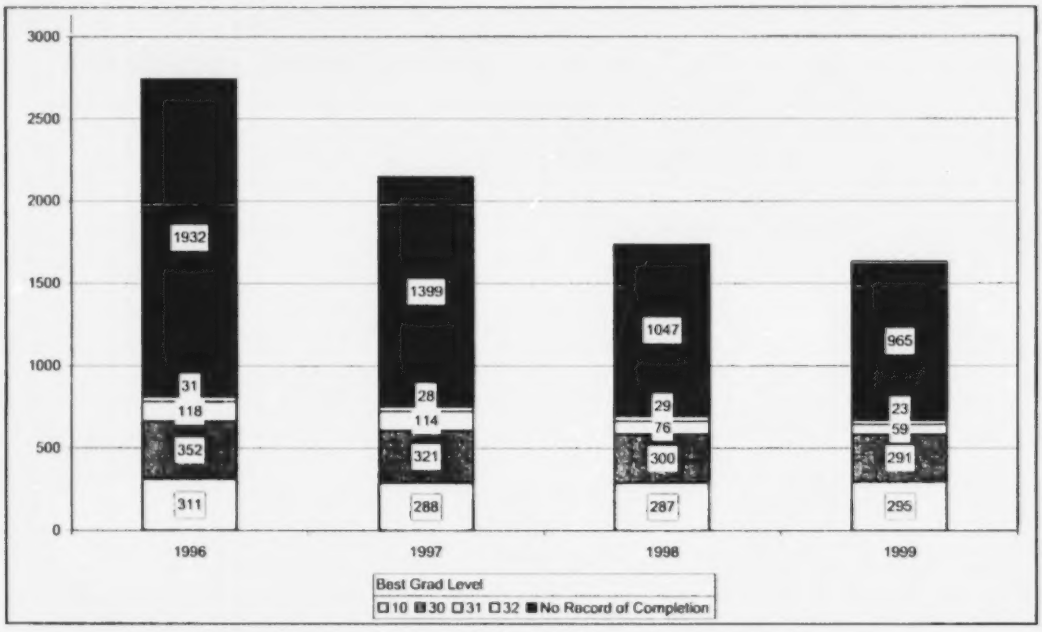
What are graduation rates at WCTC?

- ...the size of the cohort decreased by 40% over the same period, so the raw headcount was actually 18% less in 1999
  - Fewer students being assigned to programs
  - Fewer students are program-declared
    - Introduction of Asset/Compass program readiness standards
  - 1999 was also a ten-year low in cohort size; enrollments have increased since



Counts of Students by Highest Degree Level

- From 1996-1999, ethnic minorities students were stable in number (111-119) and represented an increasing proportion of all students (4% to 7%)
- From 1996-1999, special population students decreased in number (867 to 677) yet represented and increasing percentage of all students (32% to 41%)

How long does it take students to graduate?

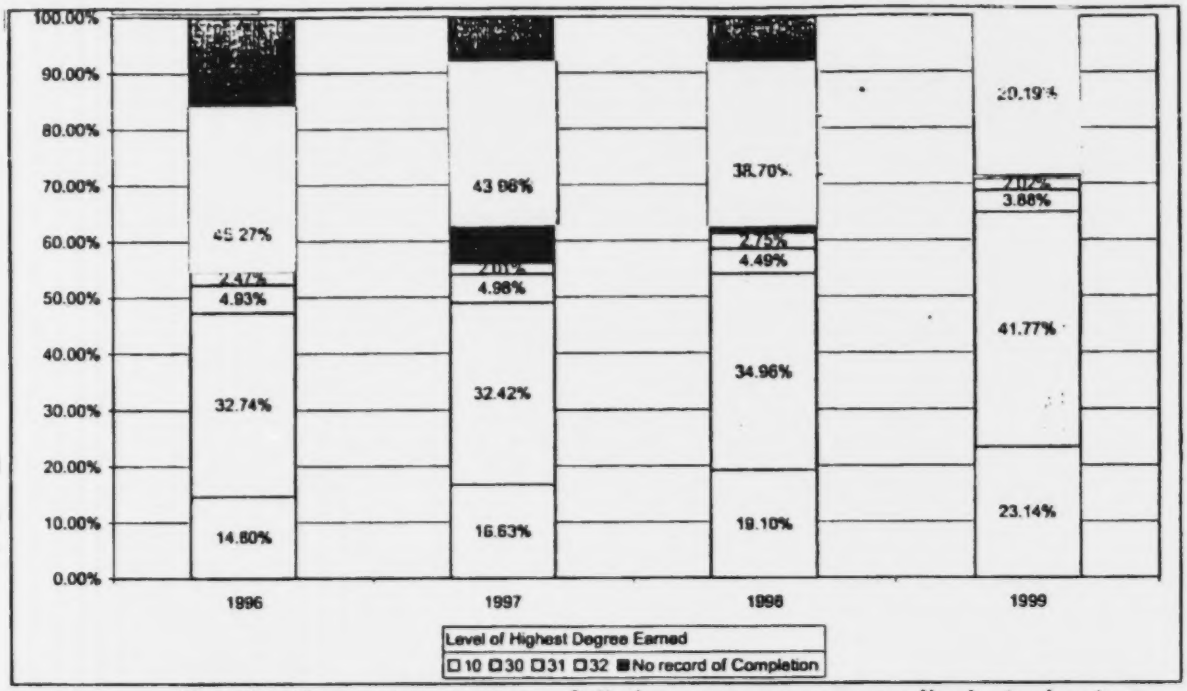
Time to graduation is estimated by subtracting the year of graduation[‡] from the date when a student took his or her first course at WCTC. Taking courses prior to becoming a program student will inflate time-to-graduate statistics.

Degree Type	Year	Graduated same year as first course	Graduated within 2 years of first course	Graduated within 3 years of first course	Graduated more than 3 years after first course
Associate's Degree	1998	6.6%	29.9%	57.7%	42.3%
	1999	5.5%	32.7%	65.4%	34.6%
Aid Code 32	1998	0%	59.1%	72.7%	27.3%
	1999	7.1%	42.8%	67.8%	32.2%
Aid Code 31	1998	8.8%	45.6%	64.0%	36.0%
	1999	14.1%	50%	65.6%	34.4%
Aid Code 30	1998	58.5%	72.8%	78.5%	21.5%
	1999	58.8%	74.7%	80.4%	19.6%

- Median time between first course and graduation:
  - Aid code 30 programs: one year
  - Aid code 31 and 32 programs: 2+ years
  - Associate's Degree (Aid code 10) programs: 3 years
- Median time from first course to graduation the same for ethnic minorities except in aid code 31 programs, where the median is 3 years

[‡] These data only available for 80-90% of graduates

Full-time program enrolled (Perkins) cohorts



- Graduation rates among full-time program-enrolled students have increased from 55% to 71%, with a four-year combined rate of 60%
  - The size of the cohort has decreased by 36%, so there are actually fewer graduates in 1999
  - Graduation rates for full-time program-enrolled minority students ranged from 37% (1996) to 45% (1999)
  - Graduation rates for full-time program-enrolled special population students ranged from 53%-57%

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Time to graduation for full-time program-enrolled cohort

Degree Type	Year	Graduated same year as first course	Graduated within 2 years of first course	Graduated within 3 years of first course	Graduated more than 3 years after first course
Associate's Degree	1998	7.8%	51.0%	88.2%	11.8%
	1999	8.1%	61.7%	92.6%	7.4%
Aid Code 32	1998	15.4%	61.5%	92.3%	7.7%
	1999	5.7%	65.7%	91.4%	8.6%
Aid Code 31	1998	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	1999	40.0%	84.0%	92.0%	8.0%
Aid Code 30	1998	92.5%	96.8%	98.2%	1.8%
	1999	95.5%	98.5%	99.6%	0.4%

- Median time to graduation for full-time program-enrolled
  - Aid code 30: one year
  - Aid code 31: one to two years
  - Aid code 10 and aid code 32: two years
- About 60% of Associate's degree and aid code 32 program students graduate in 2 years; almost 10% take more than three years to graduate
- About 50% of aid code 31 program students finish in one year; about 90% finish in two years
- About 94% of full-time aid code 30 students finish in one year or less

Implications

- Improving retention means producing graduation rates greater than 35% overall or 60% for full-time program students
  - Graduation is not the only indicator of *success*: transfer to other schools and achievement of educational goals are also successful outcomes
  - The WTCS colleges are developing measures of educational success to take these non-graduation successes into account
- Most students take more than the minimum time to complete their programs
  - Of all Associate's Degree graduates, less than 1/3 finish in 2 years, while more than 1/3 take between 3 and 5 years to finish
    - Five-year graduation rates for full-time Associate's Degree students are about 10% higher than the IPEDS (3-year) graduation rates
  - Less than 10% of *all* aid code 31 students finish in one year. However, 50% of *full-time* aid code 31 students finish in one year
    - Referring to programs by length of time (one-year, two-year, etc.) may be misleading; even among full-time students, only 50-60% finish in the time period associated with the aid code[2]
    - Associate's Degree programs should not be referred to as "two-year programs"
- Minority and special population graduation rates have not kept up with graduation rates for all students
  - Minority graduation rates continue to lag behind that of all students
  - Special population graduation rates have remained constant while the rates for all students have increased

[2] Except for aid code 30 programs

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